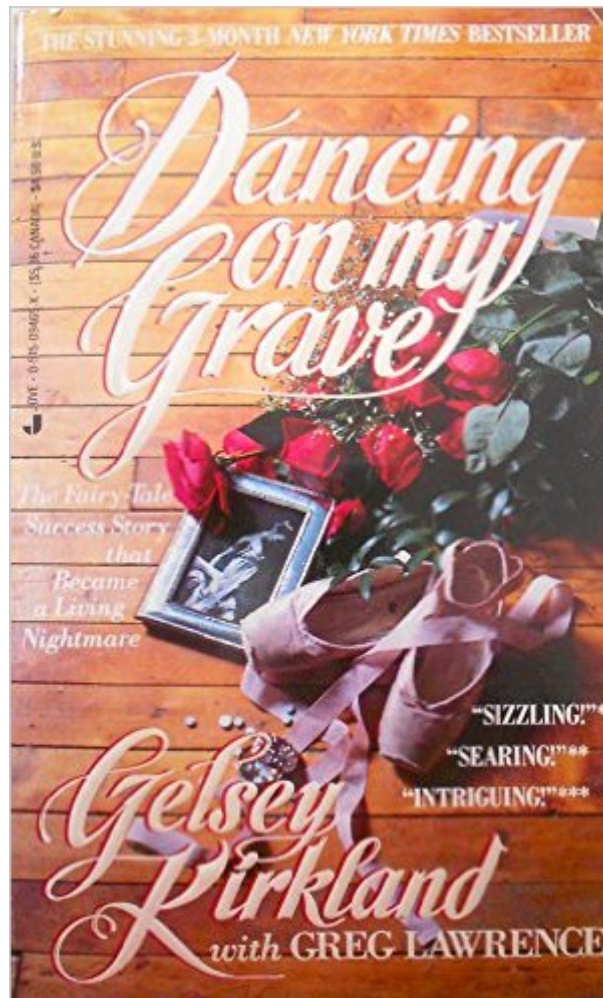


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Dancing On My Grave



Synopsis

The shattering story of a dream which became a heartbreaking nightmare for one of America's most famous ballerinas, Gelsey Kirkland, who chronicles her brilliant start as a dancer with George Balanchine, her legendary partnership with Mikhail Baryshnikov, her agonizing descent into drugs, and her struggles to rise again. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

No other autobiography I have read has ever been this powerful. I was pulled into Gelsey's heart and felt her pain. She is probably the most beautiful and amazing dancer that ever was in America. Yet she did not feel beautiful. I could relate to all of Gelsey's struggles and emotional hardships. I recommend this book to all those who enjoy autobiographies, all who enjoy ballet, and especially to those who wish to become dancers. It gives a truly realistic view into the dance world. Will become a favourite. Other books to read; *Holding Onto the Air* by Suzanne Farrell, *The Shape of Love* (which is the continuing book to *Dancing on My Grave*) by Gelsey Kirkland and Greg Lawrence.

Never have I picked up a book and been completely pulverized with such honesty about the dance world, a world I was part of for 12 years. I have recently reread this book for the 13th time. I can't count the number of passages where I felt exactly the same way about a director, a costumer, a choreographer. I thought I was alone with these impressions. Her words provide great comfort when I remember my own experiences. Many of her assertions regarding the idolatry of Balanchine and Baryshnikov vs. who they might have been underneath their "genius" touches on one simple fact: they were still human, and thus, flawed. Dance, which dies instantly, is supposedly ethereal and

perfectionistic. In reality, it is a punishing art, and takes much mental and emotional focus to deal with the fleeting splendor one achieves while onstage. Her unflinching honesty, revealed from the eye of the studio and not so much the stage, came from a great struggle throughout her parents' uneasy marriage, her alcoholic father, and the struggles of anorexia and drug addiction, appears in passage after passage. When you have delved through the lower depths, you find the words to articulate the feelings all these previous things have denied. It's as if all the physical anguish finally pushed the right words out to describe her experience. I'm sure she made more than a few enemies by revealing all, but in the end, we all have to live with ourselves. We may never know another person as intimately as we know ourselves. She wished to please everyone by being something other than herself. In the end, to paraphrase from her book, she found who she was by seeing what she was not. Out of all the Balanchine dancers who've written autobiographies, Gelsey's and Toni Bentley's "Winter Season" stand out. Both of these dancers seek the truth, and with this, they found themselves. An excellent, stunning read. I adore this book.

While many people view Gelsey as self absorbed and self serving, I see her as a product of a world which cast her in this role. Her demanding and alcoholic father (a famous writer himself) always put her sister first and made Gelsey feel like the ugly duckling. It was this inner turmoil which led her to achieve what she did because her competitive spirit, and need to prove herself to her father, drove her to not only accomplish what she did but to reach the depths that she to which she plummeted. I travelled with her during the ABT tour of 1983-84 and found her to be a driven and tortured soul who, despite her air of assurance on stage, was merely a lost child without guidance. When she met Greg Lawrence her life began to take shape as both they helped to lift each other from the morass of drugs and negativity in which they were mired. The book captures, in an unglamorized version, what happened to her during this time. It is a book of redemption and ultimate triumph.

As a ballet dancer, I have come to find the not-so-glamorous side of the ballet world: eating disorders plague it (and directors encourage them), dancers having multiple relationships with other dancers, and the constant pressure to always be at the top. Gelsey Kirkland seemed to have a ballet career that was glorious and fulfilling, yet with every hit of cocaine she took to keep her dancing, her life gained more emptiness and she was dying. Her personal torment is so personally and vividly revealed in this autobiography that you can actually feel her pain and loneliness as she reiterates each of her harrowing experiences. It is sad that some of her best dramatic performances were given at the lowest points in her personal life. This is one of the most stunning autobiographies

I have ever read.

Wow! This book was simply Amazing! The way Gelsey just opens up her heart and tells her story is beautiful! I loved how she told the truth about her partnership with Misha and showed that he wasn't the perfect man, which many have thought. Also, she brought out the true colors of Balanchine. I'm a younger dancer and had looked up to these men as gods in the ballet world, but my mind has some what changed. I could definitely re-late to her obsessiveness about the "perfect body" and becoming attached to the mirrors. I have read this book over and over and each time I learn something new. The only thing I wish is that I could have seen her perform! She is definitely my favorite dancer of all time and always will be! This is a MUST read for any dancer! Non-dancers will enjoy it too and it will give you a look in to a dancers world. The only thing is, you might have trouble with some of the ballet terms :)

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